

TOURIST SATISFACTION WITH HILL STATION DESTINATIONS - A CASE STUDY OF SHIMLA TOWN

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ABSTRACT

Himachal Pradesh has been one of the hilly states of India. The state has numerous diversities in its geographical appearance. It ranges from plains of Una, Solan, Sirmaour districts, passing through mid altitude districts like Mandi, Kullu, Kangra and Shimla up to high altitude mountainous districts like Lahaul-Spiti, Kinnaur, Chamba and upper reaches of Shimla district. The capital city of the state i.e. Shimla was inhabited by Britishers in earlier times and was their summer capital. Thus, there have been numerous buildings, temples and attractions having heritage value. It is important to understand why Tourists are attracted to hill stations. The reasons are linked to Tourism as an activity and how it can be sustained in the long run. The present study has utilized primary data collected through survey method. The survey used twenty statements on five point likert scale filled by tourists on questionnaires. The Non-parametric test i.e. Chi-square was used as a statistical technique for analysis. The results indicate that the chi-square value is significant it shows that overall tourists are satisfied with their visit to Shimla. Further the study reveals, that natural scenery are cherished while local traffic and parking of vehicles are major problem in Shimla. Last but not least this paper explains the findings and suggestions of the study.

KEYWORDS: Tourism, diversities, hill stations, tourist satisfaction and heritage.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is the temporary movement of people to the destinations outside their normal places of work and residence, the activities undertaken during their stay in those destinations, and the facilities created to cater their needs. The study of tourism is the study of people away from their usual habitat. Tourism is highly desirable to most hill stations because by attracting and serving visitors the destination earns mere or "basic" income from other parts of the country and globe. Tourism is after all a people's industry and they alone can produce encouraging results. Holistic tourism results when planning is done on integrated development of recreation resources and tourists activities to drive optimum benefits in terms of social, economic and ecological objectives on one hand and to the satisfaction of tourists

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on the other hand. Tourism is one of very significant ways, by which nations can make extraordinary progress in several fields, more so in the economic sphere. To assess the level of satisfaction of tourists it is necessary to know the views of tourists about various facilities provided to them at the destination.

Tourism in India

India's glorious tradition and rich cultural heritage is linked with the development of tourism. Architectural beauty of India is also attraction for tourists. Ajanta and Allora caves, Elephanta caves and Mughal architecture attract domestic as well as foreign tourist to these destinations. Numerous temple, churches, mosques and gurudwaras make India a paradise for tourists. India has fairly large infrastructure available for tourism along with diversity of the country across its states culturally and geographically. There is adequate transport facility and communication network system catering the need of tourists.

Tourism in Himachal Pradesh “Dev Bhoomi” name given by the ancients to Himachal Pradesh means “Abode of God”. Himachal is situated in the heart of western Himalayas. Himachal Pradesh is delightful state for visitors particularly valouring the hot season when people flock to its hill stations to escape the scorching heat of plains. In terms of tourism, the state has an immense resource of natural, cultural wealth to offer. The snow peaked mountains, glistening rivers, serene environment, ideal climate and peaceful life style, all combined to make Himachal a magnetic attraction. The state is rich in tribal culture, languages, folklore, dress forms, special himachali cuisine other than off course the rich bounty of natural beauty. The state has all elements to attract various segments of tourist’s population. But, what we need is better accessibility and stepping of the right potential markets. (Bansal, 2006)

The capital of Himachal Pradesh i.e. Shimla is celebrated summer resort for the tourist all over the world. Therefore visitors throng Shimla town throughout the year and in huge numbers in particular season since they get a respite from the dust and pollution of the big cities but also, the cool, calm and serene environment of the hills gives them respite from the hot and humid conditions in the plains.

Shimla is situated in North West Himalayas and was the summer capital of India during the pre – independence era. Shimla is now the capital of H.P. This town is spread over a ridge measuring about 12 k.m. It is perhaps the biggest hill station of the world located at an altitude of 7,262 (2,421 m) feet above sea level. A place of peace and pleasure, Shimla is a tourist resort in real sense of the world. Perhaps, the best season of the year is autumn but early spring runs a close second. There are several important tourist places in town like, Advanced Study, Ridge, Mall road, Jakhu temple, Kali Bari Temple etc. (Balokhra, 1997)

NEED OF THE STUDY

Tourism plays an important role in maintaining peace and world unity by building bridges between different cultures and encouraging tolerance through cultural exchange. The tourism sector is a huge employer, creator of economic security and contributor to society. Shimla is a popular hill station in northern India and tourist make regular visits to Shimla. In Himachal Pradesh tourism being the main source of revenue, after agriculture. Shimla is one of the main contributors in generating revenue to the state government. In this backdrop, the focus of present study is to measure the tourist satisfaction and to identify the area requiring special attention.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Casarin (2005) stated that the product is the result of the interaction between the process of the offer of an area and the process of purchasing/consumption of the tourist. Accordingly tourist satisfaction is a function of the quality and effectiveness of the influential factors or bundle of activities offered to the consumer which are associated with a touristic destination

Lee T.H. (2009) stated that destination image, attitude, motivation, natural landscapes, service and recreational equipments were attributes which affects the tourist satisfaction. Attributes like travel environment, price or value, accessibility and natural attractions influence tourist satisfaction (Alqurneh Majid et al., 2010).

Suzan Coban (2012) assumed that it will result in a positive image of a destination, loyalty to tourist destinations and satisfaction felt by tourists, such as variables. The loyalty is a concept closely related to tourists’ satisfaction and as a result even with the ideas there is a high degree of satisfaction with loyal tourists. However, in the context of travel and tourism, a review of literature reveals an abundance of studies on destination image, tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty has not been thoroughly investigated (Oppermann, 2000). Therefore, it is time for practitioners and academics to conduct more studies of loyalty in order to have greater knowledge of this concept, to understand the role of customer satisfaction in developing loyalty, the impact of other non-satisfaction determinants on customer loyalty, and their interrelationships.

OBJECTIVES

Following are the objectives of the study:

1. To assess the level of satisfaction of tourist on various dimensions.
2. To identify the area requiring special attention.
3. Suggestions for improving tourism in Shimla.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

Procedure followed:

1. **Sample:** A sample of 100 respondents were taken i.e., 100 tourists visiting Shimla town.
2. **Tool:** Questionnaire was developed by the investigator .The questions in the questionnaire were forced answer, multiple-choice, selection of best answer type. In few questions, the respondents were required to rate their answers on five point Likert scale.
3. **Method:** Survey method was employed for the data collection.

Analysis and Interpretation: Non – parametric tools were used to arrive at results namely chi-square test and scaling method i.e. Five point likert scale.

TABLE 1: Demographic characteristics of the sample and journey features

Characteristic	Distribution of Answers
Tourist's gender	Female: 44 %; male: 56%
Tourist's age	15 – 24: 19%; 25 –44: 50%; 45 – 64: 28% ; older than 65: 3%
Tourist's educational qualification	Elementary: 6%; Secondary: 43%; College or higher: 51%
Tourist's nationality	Indian tourists: 95%; Foreign tourists: 5%
Tourist's marital status	Married: 57%; single: 43%
Tourist's occupation	Government employee: 30%; businessman: 35%; any other: 35%
Type of lodging	Hotel: 68%; apart hotel: 9%; other: 23%
No. of days of visit	1-3: 85%; 4-6: 9%; 7-9: 6%
First visit to Shimla	Yes: 53%; No: 47%
Main travel motivation	Leisure/recreation/holidays: quoted by 82% of respondents; visiting Friends and family: quoted by 11% of respondents; business: quoted by 4% of respondents; health: quoted by 3% of respondents

Main form of transportation used in the journey	Rental car: 29%; private car: 41%; public transports: 26%; other: 4%
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Source: Data collected from questionnaire.

TABLE 2

STATEMENTS	d.f.	TABLE VALUE	CHI SQUARE VALUE	RANKS (S.A.-1, A-2,N-3,D.A-4,S.D.A.-5)
Hotel employees are friendly, courteous and attentive.	2	5.991	29.569	1
Sufficient staff for number of customers.	3	7.815	17.769	1
The rooms are well maintained in hotel.	3	7.815	32.292	1
The quality of food is excellent	4	9.488	30.615	2
The menu has a good variety of items	4	9.488	41.231	2
Comfortable seating and attractive tableware	3	7.815	25.523	2
Reasonable tariff is charged for hotels	3	7.815	50.754	1
There are different himachali products in shops	4	9.488	31.231	1
Parking is easily available	4	9.488	5.958	4
View are attractive	2	5.991	14.615	1
Local people are kind	2	5.991	15.613	1
Easily available road links	3	7.815	6.938	1
Local traffic creates problem	3	7.815	14.569	2
Proper signboards are available	3	7.815	32.897	2
Tourist transportation service is excellent	4	9.488	5.077	3
The buses are clean and new	4	9.488	7.846	3
I am able to complete my tourism visit to Shimla	3	7.815	17.467	1
The service allow me to enjoy my visit to Shimla	3	7.815	34.385	2
I will return my visit in the nearest	4	9.488	33.645	2
The prices are as I expect	4	9.488	33.385	2

Source: Data collected from questionnaire.

In table 2 five points Likert Scale has been used. The table 2 depicts that in all the above statements the chi-square value is significant shows that overall tourists are satisfied with their visit to Shimla.

Further the study reveals, that local traffic creates problem and parking of vehicle is a major problem in Shimla as majority of respondents have agreed on it.

TABLE 3

Sr. No.	Factor	Overall ranking
1.	Accommodation	4
2.	Recreation	6
3.	Local traffic	7
4.	Shopping facility	3
5.	Parking	8
6.	Transportation	5
7.	Sceneric beauty	1
8.	Food and drinking	2

Source: Data collected from questionnaire.

FINDINGS

Table 3 depicts 1) Sceneric beauty received the first rank the major reason for popularity of hill tourism is the overcrowded urban areas and the stress associated with the pollution, noise and crime make the people in these areas to seek peace, calm and beauty respectively.

2) Food and Drinking water received 2nd rank. The level of satisfaction of the tourists is high on this count but during the survey period it is found that the sanitary conditions apart from quality of food were poor. The variety and quality of food served by the restaurants in the town is also upto the satisfaction of tourists. Lack of local cuisines and high pricing was an issue.

3) Shopping facility received third rank. It is known from the study that purchasing of items of various varieties is found on large scale by tourist. Though the shopping facility received third rank there is a habit of duel pricing system and bargaining is common.

4) It is observed that accommodation facility received fourth rank means with relatively medium contribution to the level of satisfaction. The tourists were overall satisfied with hotels and services. The problem facing accommodation establishment is due to the fluctuation in demand. This problem is specially acute during summer season. A flood of tourist enters the city causing demand for accommodation and thereby creating a shortage of accommodation. Rise in demand prompts to exploitation.

5) Transportation received the fifth rank Shimla is well connected by road to other parts of Himachal Pradesh and nearby Chandigarh from there to other parts of country. There is a Railway link also till Shimla town. There is a very heavy rush of tourists during summer seasons. During peak tourist

season, the transport services come under strain. This causes transport problems to and from connecting station.

6) Recreation received the sixth rank. In recent, there has been manifold expansion of infrastructural and recreational facilities in the town, but these facilities could not keep pace with the taste and preference of modern day tourist. It is essential that the tourist resort become more and more popular and is able to attract an ever increasing number of tourists. The scope of recreational facilities needs to be expanded as the present places of recreation become over crowded during peak season.

7) Local traffic creates problem and has received seventh rank. Within the town roads are narrow cars parked on roadside creates local traffic and inconvenience.

8) Parking facilities received eighth rank because parking facilities are not sufficient during the whole year in summer season the problem becomes acute. Some roads are narrow designed for a limited traffic and also creates parking difficulties.

SUGGESTIONS

1. The major reason for people being attracted to Hill stations is the calm, cool and serene environments and scenic beauty they offer local residents and government should take steps to preserve it.
2. In Shimla, the recreational activities most enjoyed by tourists are visits to picnic spots, horse riding on ridge, visit to Kufri. The scope of recreational facilities needs to be expanded as the present places of recreation become over crowded during peak season.
3. Paid parking should be easily available at distinct places.
4. Easily available road links should be provided where possible.
5. Government should take initiatives to improve tourism in Himachal promptly. Government should make regular inspections and surprise visits to hotels to keep proper check.
6. Safety of tourists should be priority of the local government.
7. Tourist information centres to be established to spread awareness about Shimla town and nearby tourist places.
8. Parking facility at remote areas away from Shimla town and small buses should ply regularly from these places so that tourists can leave their vehicles parked and easily visit places across Shimla solving the traffic problem.
9. Proper signboards are not available so these should be kept on priority by tourism officials.

Various projects related to escalators, traffic lights, ropeway projects, water ATMs, beautification of the town must be accomplished on time. It would make tourism reach more heights and revenue to the state government and local entrepreneurs of all types and kinds.

CONCLUSION

Shimla has many places of tourist interest. The study concludes tourism being the main source of income after agriculture and economy majorly depends on it along with all entrepreneurs of all types and size. Still it is worthwhile to identify the areas requiring special attention; the level of satisfaction of the tourist by noting their views about the facilities provided to them is assessed. It is send already that there is a general dissatisfaction about accommodation and parking facilities. The major reason for people being attracted to Hill stations is the calm, cool and serene environments and scenic beauty they offer. The natural environment being the mainstay of hill tourism and a supporting and causal factor of many other forms of Tourism. The preservation of natural environment and ecosystem becomes of paramount importance.

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